

The
Melville Society
N E W S L E T T E R

AUTUMN, 1957

Volume XIII

Number 3

The annual meeting of the Society was held in the Top Flight Room of the Memorial Union Building, University of Wisconsin, on Tuesday, September 10. Twenty members and guests were present. President Howard Horsford presided.

There was a preliminary discussion regarding the presidential succession.* Laurence Barrett, who was scheduled to serve as president during 1958, reported that he would be out of the country during a large portion of the year and suggested the wisdom of having some other member serve in his place. After some discussion, the group agreed that Barrett would be excused from office during the coming year and serve instead during 1959. This places Wilson L. Heflin next in the line of succession. He is being asked to assume the presidency during 1958 in place of Barrett.

The secretary presented a report on finances, membership, and his general activities. (The annual financial report will appear in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.) He read a letter from Gil Wilson suggesting that the Society take some action to secure a plaque to be placed near the site of Melville's birthplace in New York City. He also presented the question of whether to keep or dispose of the two illustrations of *Moby-Dick* which Wilson earlier had presented to the Society. After discussion of these matters, it was voted that the president should appoint a committee with power to take appropriate action in the name of the Society with regard to the plaque proposed for Melville's birthplace. It was voted also that the Society should retain possession of the Wilson illustrations but place them on deposit in the Berkshire Athenaeum, where they would be available upon request for various exhibits. The Athenaeum, incidentally, has kindly agreed to serve as the repository of the Society's files and records.

Barrett served as temporary chairman during the election of officers. The following new officers were elected: Tyrus Hillway (whose term as secretary comes to an end December 31, 1957) as a member of the executive committee, serving for five years (1962); Howard Horsford as secretary for a three-year term (1960).

Note that, beginning January 1, 1958, all correspondence should be addressed to the new secretary at the Department of English, Princeton University.

The program of the meeting consisted of talks by Merton M. Sealts and Harrison Hayford. Sealts discussed various problems with respect to his work on Melville's lectures and shorter works, especially the "Burgundy Club Sketches." His paper is to be published in the near future (*Harvard University Library Bulletin*). Hayford spoke on "Problems of Editing *Billy Budd*." He divided his remarks into three categories: (1) problems of preparing a text for the general reader and student, (2) problems of preparing the genetic text — that is, one showing the author's revisions and the general development of the story, and (3) problems of determining a final text, or the text Melville intended or would have produced had he published the book during his lifetime.

NOTES

The manuscript of a collection of Melville's letters, prepared by Merrell Davis and William Gilman, has been completed and forwarded to the Yale University Press. It includes an introduction, the texts of some 250 letters (15 to 20 of them not previously published), explanatory notes, a checklist of the letters, and textual notes.

Announced for December publication: Milton R. Stern, *The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), \$5.75.

Published October 3: Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Anchor Books), 95 cents.

Due in November: Morton M. Sealts, *Melville as Lecturer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), \$5.00.

The comic book version of *Moby-Dick* was recently discussed and roundly condemned by panelists on the Encyclopedia Britannica television program on Sunday, September 18.

Robert F. McDonnell and Thomas J. Roberts, Ohio University, are compiling an international index to periodicals which

publish articles bearing upon English and American literature and language. The index is to be known as *Scholars' Market*. Information about the Melville Society Newsletter will be included.

The Kendall Whaling Museum has recently opened in Sharon, Massachusetts. Its collection contains a particularly fine group of whaling pictures.

Dr. James Kirsch, analytical psychologist, will publish a paper on Melville soon in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* (London).

Several members have suggested that Queequeg's mark (see Chapter XVIII of *Moby-Dick*) may well have been a cross drawn roughly in the shape of a figure eight lying on its side. The figure, with one loop somewhat larger than the other and with the smaller loop flattened at the end, vaguely resembles a whale. Symbolically, it could have represented a whale.

Monroe Litman is designing a "most interesting and striking" (to quote one of our members who has seen the preliminary designs) edition of *Moby-Dick*.

Gossip: It has been reliably reported that Ray Bradbury, author of John Huston's working script for the motion picture version of *Moby-Dick*, had never read Melville's novel before securing the assignment.

C. Merton Babcock's Melville lexicon, on which he still is working, will contain over 2,000 entries and should provide an accurate picture of Melville's many contributions to American English and the English language in general. Plans for publication have not yet been announced.

The Sagamore Press has indicated that it hopes to publish more of Melville in the near future.

The Grove Press, which has issued paperback editions of *The Confidence Man*, *Pierre*, and *White Jacket*, will publish *Omoo* during the spring of 1958.

Saburo Yamaya, professor of American literature at Hosei University in Tokyo, recently (1955-56) studied at Johns

Hopkins University with Charles R. Anderson. Readers will recall that his article, "The Stone Image of Melville's *Pierre*," appeared not long ago in *Studies in English Literature* (Japan).

The Ronald Press Company has given considerable thought (it reports) to the possibility of producing a *Best of Melville* volume but has finally decided against the project.

During 1958 the executive committee of the Society will be made up of the following elected members: President, Wilson L. Heflin (term on committee expires 1961); Nathalia Wright (term expires 1958); Laurence Barrett (term expires 1960); Tyrus Hillway (term expires 1962); secretary, Howard C. Horsford (term expires 1960).

ADDITIONS TO MELVILLE LOG

Louis G. Pecek of the Ohio State University contributes the following information referring to Melville in the *Albion* for 1855 and 1856:

1855. March 17. *The Albion* (William Young?) reviews *Israel Potter*. "A downright good book" with "a masculine vigor, and even a certain fantastical ruggedness, that separate it from the herd of smoothly written tales, and give it, so to speak, a distinctness and raciness of flavor."

1856. July 7. *The Albion* (Young?) reviews *Piazza Tales*. The "brilliant and erratic" author's tales, "imperfect as they are," indicate that he is "brimful of talent." "The Bell Tower" mentioned specifically as "a fine conception, rather bunglingly [*sic*] worked out."

REMINDER

Beginning January 1, 1958, headquarters of the Society will be at the address of the new secretary: Howard C. Horsford, Department of English, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. Old records will be placed on file in the Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER

IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership is two dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Associate membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes all issues of the Newsletter. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, at Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.